



Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose of this plan, the planning process, and the Byway's historic and cultural significance.

THE NATIONAL ROAD CORRIDOR— A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In this plan, the term “National Road corridor” is sometimes used to refer to the entire Maryland Historic National Road Scenic Byway (the Byway), from the Baltimore Inner Harbor to the Pennsylvania state line. This term requires some explanation, since it differs from the technical definition of the term “National Road.”

In 1806, the federal government selected Cumberland to be the eastern starting point of the National Road, at first called the Cumberland Road. As early as 1792, the State of Maryland had begun building a system of private turnpikes to connect points between Baltimore and Cumberland; however, these pikes were not part of the Federal mandate. The private pikes were taken over by the state of Maryland in the 1830s and combined to become the National Pike, which connected to the National Road in Cumberland.

With the passage of time, the whole route began to be referred to as the National Road. For convenience, this Plan adopts the term “National Road corridor” when referring to the historical properties of the entire Byway.



The National Road: A Nation-Building Highway

Originally called the Cumberland Road, the National Road was the first federally planned and funded highway in the United States. In 1806, Congress approved a national road to connect the port of Baltimore with the burgeoning Northwest Territory. The purpose of the road was to provide a direct overland route by cutting straight across the Appalachian Mountains. The route was seen as a “portage” between the waters of the Ohio River and the Baltimore Harbor. The route west from Cumberland to the Ohio River was constructed with federal funds, a controversial and major internal improvement commissioned by the federal government. A historic marker in Cumberland marks the origin of the National Road (Figure 1-1).

The connecting Maryland turnpikes from the Baltimore Inner Harbor to the City of Cumberland were privately funded, since many of the pikes already existed or were currently under construction and did not require a federal mandate. This system of pikes eventually became known as the National Pike. Together, the National Pike and the National Road became the Nation's first federally funded highway west, often referred to simply as the National Road (see sidebar).

West of Cumberland, the route is generally referred to as the National Road or Cumberland Road. Various segments of the route east of Cumberland have had other names, such as the Bank Road, Baltimore Pike, Frederick Pike, and Boonsborough Pike (former spelling of Boonsboro). On present day street maps, the historic route still has several names, such as the Old National Pike, Western Pike, National Pike, and National Highway. The route is also labeled on highway maps as MD 144, US 40, US Alternate 40, and Scenic US 40, in various segments. In towns, the route became ‘Main Street’.

Whatever it is called, the Byway follows one of the most historically and culturally significant transportation routes in the United States. For its first fifty years, the National Road was the most important highway westward. The story of its decline and resurrection over the next 100 years is revealed in the visible layers of building and rebuilding along its entire length. According to the cultural geographer John Jakle: “Here history is thickly layered in surviving veneers of material culture along a highway trajectory of true historical importance” (Raitz 254). The “National Pike Towns” have a new opportunity to envision the next layer of history— one that captures the enthusiasm for the past as a way to imagine the future.



The Purpose of the Corridor Partnership Plan

The purpose of this Corridor Partnership Plan is to identify the many ways that communities and civic groups can work together to preserve and enhance the Maryland Historic National Road Scenic Byway by organizing and by taking advantage of existing programs. The purpose of the plan is not to advocate or create more regulations. Instead, the plan has identified general strategies and specific actions to:

- Preserve the historic, scenic, and natural resources along the Byway;
- Develop and enhance the Byway to attract visitors and increase tourism;
- Celebrate the heritage of the Byway corridor and tell its stories; and
- Maintain the high quality of life found along the Byway.

The plan is part of a six-state effort to gain All-American Road designation for the Historic National Road Scenic Byway through the National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Nomination of a route for consideration by the National Scenic Byways Program requires that a corridor management plan be written which details the specific actions, procedures, controls, operational practices, and administrative strategies needed to maintain the intrinsic qualities of the scenic byway. Funding for this plan's development was provided by the FHWA program.

The Planning Process

In order to oversee the development of the plan, the Maryland National Road Partnership Development Team (PDT) was formed, consisting of the Maryland Department of Planning and its four agency partners: the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, Maryland State Highway Administration, Maryland Historical Trust, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The PDT hired a multi-disciplinary team of landscape architects, community planners, engineers, and historians, headed by Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C., to assist in the development of the plan.

A Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) for the plan was also formed. The CAG included representatives appointed by the counties of Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, Howard, Carroll, and Baltimore, and Baltimore City. In addition, the advisory group included a number of people throughout the corridor who brought special expertise and resources to the planning effort. Over 150 people throughout the corridor have participated in CAG activities since the start of the planning process.

Over sixteen months, the PDT, CAG, and the consultants met together a total of ten times to accomplish the following:

- Formulate a vision, goals, and objectives for the Corridor Partnership Plan;



Figure 1-1 This stone in Cumberland marks the beginning of the federally-funded route west. There are conflicting opinions as to whether the road was located in 1805, according to this stone, or 1806, according to Thomas B. Searight, author of The Old Pike, published in Uniontown, PA 1894.



Figure 1-2 Original mile marker restored at the Casselman Inn in Grantsville.



Figure 1-3 Four Mile House, 520 National Highway, LaVale (photo by Mike Lewis)

- Identify important features and opportunities and define the corridor's intrinsic qualities;
- Develop strategies to preserve and enhance the important features and to help determine how best to take advantage of the opportunities;
- Make recommendations regarding how the plan will be implemented; and
- Make recommendations regarding pursuit of designation as an All-American Road.

The Maryland Department of Planning and the four partner agencies also sponsored public workshops as part of the effort to gather input and build support for the plan. Meetings and workshops were held in several locations along the corridor to help insure that the planning was geographically diverse.

Significance of the Corridor's Intrinsic Qualities

For a byway to be eligible for designation as an All-American Road through the FHWA's National Scenic Byways Program, it must possess two or more of the six categories of intrinsic qualities as defined by the program policy published in the Federal Register Notice (1995). The national significance of the Maryland Historic National Road Scenic Byway is primarily associated with its historic and cultural qualities, supported by regionally significant scenic, recreational, and natural qualities.

The following summarizes the significance of the historic and cultural intrinsic qualities as they apply to the Byway according to FHWA's guidance on intrinsic qualities.



Figure 1-4 The Flintstone Hotel is being restored by its current owners. (photo by Maryland State Highways Administration)

The Historic Qualities of the National Road Corridor

The following questions are suggested by FHWA as a way to examine the significance of a byway's intrinsic historic qualities:

- *Do the byway's historic resources contain enough features to create a story with a certain level of continuity and coherence?*
- *Are there legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with the physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or man made, that are of such historic significance that they educate the visitor and stir an appreciation of the past?*
- *Are the historic features inventoried, mapped and interpreted?*
- *Is the story connected to a larger context that relates to the evolution of the American nation and society?*

For the National Road corridor, the answer to all of the above questions is a clear "yes." An extensive inventory of historic features was prepared and organized for the 178-mile route utilizing a geographic information system (GIS). The resources were grouped according to three distinct eras relating to the transformation of the Byway over time. Chapter 4 of this plan presents a thorough explanation of these eras and associated resources:

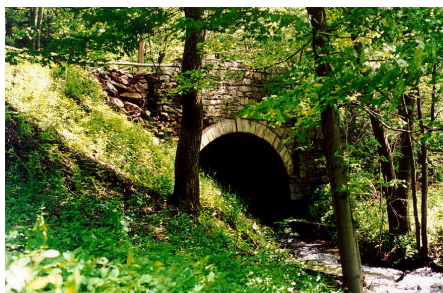


Figure 1-5 One of the original stone arch bridges still extant along the Byway.



- The “Heyday” of the National Road, corresponding to the time when the National Road corridor was the primary east-west route and the gateway to the “Old Northwest” (approximately 1810-1850). Many of the repeating elements that were found along the route are still present today, including mileposts (Figure 1-2), mile houses (Figure 1-3), inns and taverns (Figure 1-4), and stone arch bridges (Figure 1-5);
- The “Agriculture and Trade” era, corresponding to the time associated with the mechanization of agriculture and the expansion of commerce and industry brought about by the railroads and the canal system (approximately 1850-1910). Although during this time the National Road experienced a steady decline, many of this era’s associated resources are still evident, including Victorian mansions and homes, commercial buildings, and well maintained farmsteads (Figure 1-6) that are all visible from the Byway. Several historic districts along the route recognize the significance of this era. Railroad and canal resources lie close by the corridor (Figure 1-7); and
- The “Revival” period, corresponding to the increase in popularity of the automobile (approximately 1910-1960), resulting in a resurgence of construction of highway-related services, such as motels and tourist cabins (Figure 1-8), scenic overlooks, road houses, garages, and later, early commercial centers. Sometimes, these new services were remodeled or rebuilt at the same locations as the originals.

Given the length and complexity of the route, it was desirable to work closely with those CAG members who had the most knowledge of a particular area’s intrinsic qualities. In order to facilitate this process, CAG members were given single-use cameras and asked to develop a “photographic tour” to tell the story of the National Road in their area. The 27 resulting tours uncovered many features that have yet to be inventoried and listed on National or State registers of historic places.

The inventory and sites revealed by the photographic tours, categorized according to the three distinct eras of the Byway, allows for “layers” of history to be uncovered throughout the entire 178-mile corridor. The legacies of the past that are associated with each of these eras inform the visitor about the significance of the National Road as a historic travel and trade route, and in turn attest to how transportation advances transformed the route through each of its distinct periods.

The inventory and photographic tours help reveal the multiple layers of history and tell the stories of the transformation of the Byway. The inventory in Chapter 4 demonstrates that there are enough remaining features to create a continuous and coherent story. Travelers will be exposed to a sequence of stories that can stand alone as part of a short trip off an Interstate, or that can be followed for the entire length of the route. Interpretation will focus on three basic themes:



Figure 1-6 View of agricultural lands near Doughregan Manor in Howard County.



Figure 1-7 The Byway in Ellicott City is next to the nation’s first railroad station.



Figure 1-8 View of an old motel cabin in Allegany Grove, near LaVale. (photo by Mike Lewis)



Figure 1-9 The National Road as seen from Lovers Leap, showing the many layers of railroad, automobile, and water travel through the Narrows.

- The origins of the National Road, including the first use of federal funds to build a road;
- The way in which the route transformed the people and places along its path and the stories that have evolved from that transformation; and
- The transformation of the road itself as it evolved in response to changes in transportation technology— the canal, the railroad, and the modern highway.

The National Road Corridor as a Cultural Landscape

The National Road corridor is much more than an historic road. The construction of the route was an engineering feat that had a tremendous social impact on the region. The building of a National Road stimulated development all along the corridor's entire route. The National Road, as so clearly described in Hubert Wilhelm's essay (Raitz 256), served as a "Corridor for Ideas." People, ideas, and things all migrated across the Appalachians through distinctly different geographic regions, recreating the settlement patterns and homes they had left behind, while responding to the topography and building materials they found locally.

The road allowed for the transmission of culture and values. It was the intent of the federal government to use the road to develop the interior of the country, as well as to foster a common culture. The National Road has also been referred to as the dividing line between north and south (including Underground Railroad routes), and to some extent had an effect on north/south politics due to the decision to locate it so far north. Politicians used the road as a "soapbox" at coach stops to get votes and to meet constituents.

The National Road corridor has received the imprint of many different layers of transportation routes: a Native American trail, an early Colonial pathway, the first federally funded road project, a national paved highway, and an Interstate highway, sometimes paralleled by a canal and railroad (Figure 1-9).

The National Road corridor is a "textbook" of vernacular landscapes, building styles and construction techniques employed all across America. Reading the cultural landscapes of the Byway illustrates in vivid fashion how the road transformed the culture and how the culture then transformed the road.

The grand plan for the road itself spawned the development of linear-shaped towns— dominated by a focus on "Main Street," a common model of settlement along the National Road and Pike. Residents prospered from the business that the road provided. During its height, several stage coaches per day needed rest and refreshment (both people and horses). "Staging Stops", as they were called, were built by the stage coach companies about every 11 miles or so. Horses were changed, and the stage coaches continued through the night.



Wagoners, on the other hand, stopped travelling at nightfall. According to CAG member and local historian Jack Caruthers, 12 to 15 miles constituted a good day's trip for a wagoner.

The National Road corridor cut a cross-section through seven different physiographic provinces, which in Maryland run parallel to the coast. A traveler going east or west was forced to cut across more geographic and cultural boundaries than a traveler moving north or south. Construction of the road itself was accomplished by members of various ethnic groups who settled their families along the road as well. Cities such as Frostburg, Cumberland, Hagerstown, Frederick and Baltimore witnessed waves of economic opportunity that continued to change the focal points of their ethnic identity several times. Towns remain proud of their roots (Figure 1-10), continuing to celebrate their heritage through festivals and special events.

The Maryland Historic National Road Scenic Byway is special because no other historic crossing of the Appalachian Mountains (e.g., Routes 30, 50, or 60) can boast of so many different layers of east-west travel history, and nowhere else can the relationship be so clearly seen between road building and culture. The Byway is a unique resource with the potential to tell the story of America's transformation from a set of coastal colonies to a nation of expanding opportunities and increasing diversity.



Figure 1-10 "Augustoberfest" banner announcing a local festival in Hagerstown. (photo by Elizabeth Earley)